

To: Public Health Committee

From: Pamela M Lucashu, Durham CT

Re: HB 6645 An Act Concerning Compassionate Aid in Dying for Terminally Ill Patients

Public Hearing: March 20, 2013

Testimony in Opposition to HB 6645

I ask you to vote against HB 6645, which *lacks* compassion in seeking physician assisted suicide in Connecticut.

The history available where physician-assisted suicide (PAS) exists demonstrates that:

- 1) The majority of those seeking it do so because of concerns about quality of life issues, not pain.
- 2) The bill is not about providing choice. Palliative and hospice care offer choices to the terminally ill that help to maintain dignity and quality of life.
- 3) Where PAS exists, doctor shopping and undue influence have occurred.
- 4) PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE OPENS THE DOOR TO EUTHANASIA, AND CREATES A DUTY TO DIE.

Evidence of the "duty to die" mentality is present in the cases of Barbara Wagner and Randy Stroup.¹ Barbara and Randy, both on Medicaid in Oregon, received letters from the insurance company telling them their insurance would not cover their treatment, but would pay for assisted suicide. Can you imagine a more callous way of being told you are not worthy of life?

I have volunteered as a hospice worker and have spoken to patients and families who were grateful for the way hospice care – and palliative care- provided dignity and pain management for the dying. Many people who have not experienced hospice care, and are fearful of the end of life, are relieved to learn about the many ways that pain can be alleviated and life celebrated. Medication is available not only for pain management, but also anxiety and depression, along with referrals for counseling. The dying were able to get past the depression, resolve issues in their lives, and spend quality time with their loved ones before death. PAS would deprive them of the positive closure that is available through hospice and palliative care.

I am not addressing the differences between this bill and the more "conservative" law present in Oregon and Washington because adding "safeguards" will not make this bill safe. It does not present choice or compassion. It opens the door to abuse of the ill and the elderly when we have choices and compassion already available in Connecticut hospice and palliative care programs.

Thank you for your time,

Pamela M Lucashu

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/personal-view/4736927/Right-to-die-can-become-a-duty-to-die.html>